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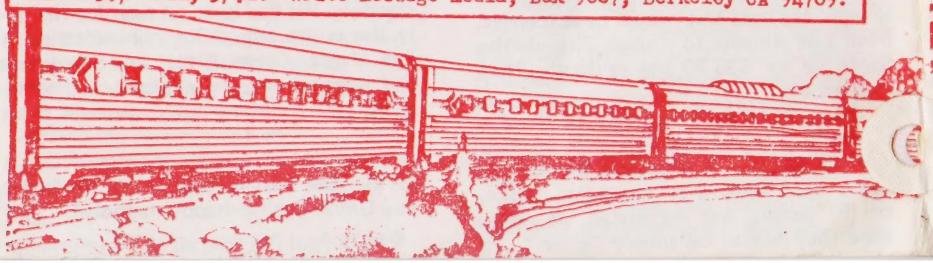

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 2 NO. 11
JUNE 5, 1972

#37

transpo 72

auto-train

RAIL TRAVELER'S DIARY with: Paul Rayton

CITY OF LOS ANGELES/ KANSAS CITY

Date: December 17, 1970

PART II - Concluded

Excited and invigorated by our 50-minute shopping spree in the brisk air of Cheyenne's December evening, we made a last-minute dash back to our train. We re-boarded our car, our "Pacific Home," now far away from home, now placed in a completely different consist from that which we had enjoyed thus far on our journey from Los Angeles. No more dome lounge, no more full dining car. We were now clearly a secondary train. We didn't rate all the prestige equipment of the CITY OF LOS ANGELES.

But we hadn't been forgotten. We had a name, after all--the CITY OF KANSAS CITY--and that meant something, didn't it? As we pulled out of the Cheyenne station to head south to Denver, I decided to explore the train. To the rear of us was a design-dated and incredibly dingy lounge car. The brown and dark blue colors were strictly mausoleum. The lingering stench of long-dead cigars and billions of cigarette-miles hung heavily in the almost polluted air. Some used but readable morning newspapers were lying around. At the far end of the car a vertically-rising metal door rattled noisily. From the space behind it railroad bartenders once held forth, enlivening trips for countless passengers. Not anymore--not tonight. It was almost the night before Christmas and all thru this car not a creature was stirring, other than myself.

Rearwards from the lounge, things looked a lot brighter. We may have lost our full-size dining car, but we could allay our anxieties about adequate alimentation. We found one of the UP lunch counter dining cars, wherein passengers could be seated either at a cafe-style counter or at one of six regular-sized dining car tables. It looked very inviting and we would soon be back, ready for dinner.

Forward from our sleeping car I found two coaches, neither one very full. You could immediately sense in them a prevailing disgruntled air. Some passengers were being quite vocal about it. To avoid the bother of having to "wye" the train twice (in both Cheyenne and Denver), the train was run backward between the two points. In a sleeping car room you would hardly know the difference, but all these people in the coaches had their seats set for going forward and only gradually did the realization come over them that we'd be going backward for the next two hours. Nobody had prepared them for this, and no crew member volunteered any assistance for those who wanted to turn their seats around. Many people get very uneasy when riding backward, so this backward train movement was a devious economy indeed. At any rate, one passenger who had ridden the train before explained the situation to the grousing patrons and calm was restored.

Because of the informal air I felt about the train, we did not change for dinner but went dressed rather casually. The dining car crew was now new (only our sleeping car Porter worked thru the whole distance from L.A.) and in excellent spirits, and the incandescent lighting of the dining car gave it a warm ambience that was welcome, especially with the snow piled just outside.

"Secondary" or "past its prime" or "downgraded" or whatever you may call this train in 1970, you couldn't criticize the dining service. In addition to the linens and fresh flowers on each table, the menu was once again customized. "The City of Kansas City," read the heading. The prices were again moderate--I had now begun to expect that from the UP--and, for a train of such short mileage and limited patronage, the selection was nothing short of remarkable. Three regular entrees, a special steak dinner, a hamburger plate, and several a la carte items made for a menu that skillfully balanced

(Continued on page 14)

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor at Large; Richard Tower, Research Editor; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer.
Projected mailing date for this issue: June 12.

AMTRAK TO GET INCREASED FUNDS FROM CONGRESS

As we go to press, the joint House-Senate compromise committee looking at Amtrak's funding appears to be recommending $225 million for the corporation for the coming fiscal year, an increase from the $170 million voted by the House. In addition, $100 million in guaranteed loans would be made available to Amtrak. The Senate had voted $150 million extra to be used specifically for upgrading urban corridors. This part of the bill was dropped in the compromise committee, but the $100 million in loans was approved. Two million dollars to provide train service to Canada and Mexico was also approved. The House's limitation on salaries of Amtrak executives, with a top of $60,000 per year, was kept in the bill. This provision would lower President Roger Lewis's present $125,000 salary, unless the remainder could be available from corporation profits. The compromise committee was under the leadership of Sen. Magnuson of Washington and Rep. Staggers of West Virginia.

The bill now goes back to the floor of each house of Congress for final approval, and then goes to President Nixon for his signature. It seems unlikely that Nixon would veto the bill, especially in an election year. However, it is still possible for the Office of Management and Budget to withhold funds even though they are approved by Congress. This office is now under the aegis of fiscally tight-fisted Caspar W. Weinberger, former State Finance Director under Gov. Reagan of California.

Besides being voted more money than the administration had requested, Amtrak has just profited from an agreement with Penn Central, whereby Amtrak will no longer pay it and most of the other railroads a 4% fee for liability insurance. This will result in a savings to Amtrak of an estimated $9 million per year. Now Amtrak will take over liability for its passengers and the equipment it owns and will pay the railroads 3.67 cents per train mile to cover liability for the railroads' equipment and employees. Another portion of the Penn Central agreement stipulates that Amtrak must pay the railroad for costs the road claims are related only to passenger trains and would not have been incurred if only freight were running.

AMTRAK PREPARES FALL SCHEDULES

With the summer season now underway, Amtrak is busily preparing for its service next fall. Not all the service changes to be made then are known yet, but a few are available: the daily CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO train between San Francisco and Chicago will revert to tri-weekly running. The DENVER ZEPHYR is expected to continue its daily operation over the eastern leg of that route. The last daily CITY will run September 10. The CHIEF will be dropped after summer. September 10 will see its last trips in each direction. Thus will also end the thru Los Angeles - New York cars. The CAROLINA COAST will have its last southbound trip September 9 and its last northbound trip September 10.

Amtrak's service to Canada and Mexico is expected to get underway by fall. It seems unlikely at this time that these trains will be running before summer's end, partly because of the slowness of Congress in appropriating the necessary funds.

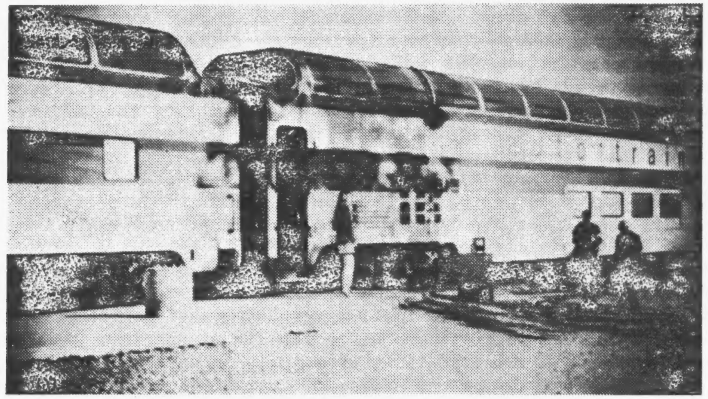
It is not known at this time whether Amtrak plans to have fall timetables available for distribution by September 10, the major changeover date of new train schedules.

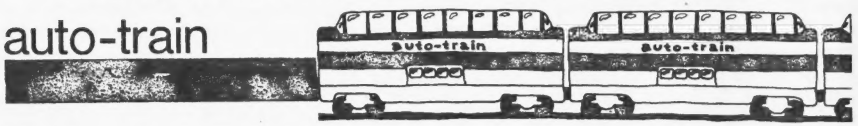
JUNE 11 TIMETABLES NOT READY YET

Amtrak's nationwide timetable showing summer schedule changes is not going to be ready for the June 11 date at which they take effect. At the time we go to press, it was known that the timetables were still being proofed, and that printing and nationwide distribution were still to be accomplished. The problem was in part that the number of conventional trains to be placed in Northeast Corridor service had not been established.

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar





The AUTO-TRAIN is the best passenger train in North America. Period. That is the conclusion your East Coast Editor and Photographer reached after riding the AUTO-TRAIN from Lorton, Va., to Sanford, Fla., and return.

The southward trip was made Friday, May 12; the return on Saturday, May 13. AUTO-TRAIN received an A-1 rating from us on all counts: equipment, speed, food, entertainment. But the biggest difference, the overwhelming difference in comparison with other trains is the way the employees treat the passengers. AUTO-TRAIN's employees are so young and well-trained that they just don't know the meaning of "railroad rudeness." AUTO-TRAIN's passengers are pampered, and they love it.

The first thing we noticed at Lorton was that the terminal track layout is now complete, and autos were being loaded at the new ramp which has three stub tracks. Loading and unloading is now much faster than before. Passengers must arrive at Lorton by 7pm. Altho departure is 8pm, AUTO-TRAIN runs as an extra on the RF&P, and we were able to leave at 7:45.

Passengers had begun loading about 5pm. By departure time most of the riders had enjoyed their dinner in the Lemon Tree Buffet or the Purple Plum Buffet. The current menu, soon to be altered, features fried chicken, roast beef, Salisbury steak, potatoes, peas and carrots, and a variety of salads and desserts. The menu replaces the original gourmet foods which were not as popular with the passengers. The food is prepared by Marriot, Inc., of Washington and Tampa, and it is excellent. The buffets are operated by smiling young hostesses, a pleasant change from the often crabby old dining car waiters.

When dinner is over, about 8:45, a choice of two movies is offered in the buffets. Those who prefer drinks and entertainment go to the Night Club dome. There is a young man who sings and accompanies himself on the guitar or the piano at the front of the dome. Meanwhile the hostesses are busily bringing up drinks and peanuts from the bar downstairs. The AUTO-TRAIN Night Club must be the only bar on wheels that is busier than the Metroclub cars. Downstairs bars are open in some of the below-dome lounges.

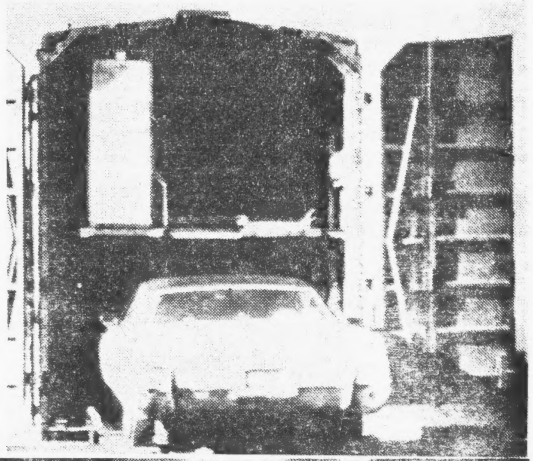
The AUTO-TRAIN made a quick trip to Richmond, providing us with the smoothest of countless rides on the RF&P. An AUTO-TRAIN man noted, with a laugh, that the southward trip to Richmond usually takes 1hr, 30mins, whereas the northbound run over RF&P often takes 10mins more. The difference, he said, was that when the crew are coming toward Richmond, they're coming home.

The AUTO-TRAIN had to stay at Richmond's Acca Yard for 40mins waiting for its scheduled departure time. The train runs extra on RF&P, timetable on SCL as Nos. 1 and 2. Amtrak's southbound SILVER METEOR passed on its way into Broad Street Station, but it was late leaving Richmond, so the AUTO-TRAIN pulled out first. Since the AUTO-TRAIN had a heavy consist of 27 cars, the METEOR gradually overtook it. No. 1 was held at the north end of the single-track Roanoke River bridge (Weldon, N.C.), and Amtrak #83 soon shot past, led by three E units.

About midnight I headed for my sleeper. From just south of Wilson, N.C., to Jacksonville, Fla., the famous Coast Line double main has been single-tracked, and I was conscious of many meets with streamliners and hotshot freights. Since most freight and passenger traffic was transferred to this line after the merger, SCL probably regrets that the double track was ever removed.

Because of the meets, we were about 40mins tardy at Jacksonville; and after two more meets, 55mins tardy at Sanford. Passenger complaints were nonexistent, since everybody was enjoying the ride so much. Hostesses gave out free sandwiches as lunchtime approached, even tho a fine continental breakfast had been served all morning.

The Sanford terminal already has a platform shelter, which is still being built at Lorton. Also, the loading ramp at Sanford has been in service considerably longer than the ramp at Lorton. Equipment maintenance is handled at Sanford. Lorton terminal does have one up on Sanford: its permanent station building is already in service.



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Amtrak's northbound SILVER STAR left Sanford on time at 6:25pm Saturday. AUTO-TRAIN was scheduled to leave at 8pm and beat the STAR to Richmond, which it was destined to do on this trip. Next day the STAR passed Lorton about 1:15pm; it had been late arriving Richmond and was delayed 1hr 10mins there as E units had to be turned because of train control failure in the lead unit.

AUTO-TRAIN's Sanford office had a bulletin board showing that sleeper space was sold out thru August, and that coach space was available only on certain dates during the summer. Northbound business has been greater than southbound in late spring, so on May 13 some coach passengers were accommodated in a UP sleeper from Sanford to Richmond, after which they rode in lounges. The sleeper could not go thru to Lorton because of the length of the passenger platform track. In effect, these passengers got sleeper service in return for transferring cars at Richmond, and they weren't unhappy at all!

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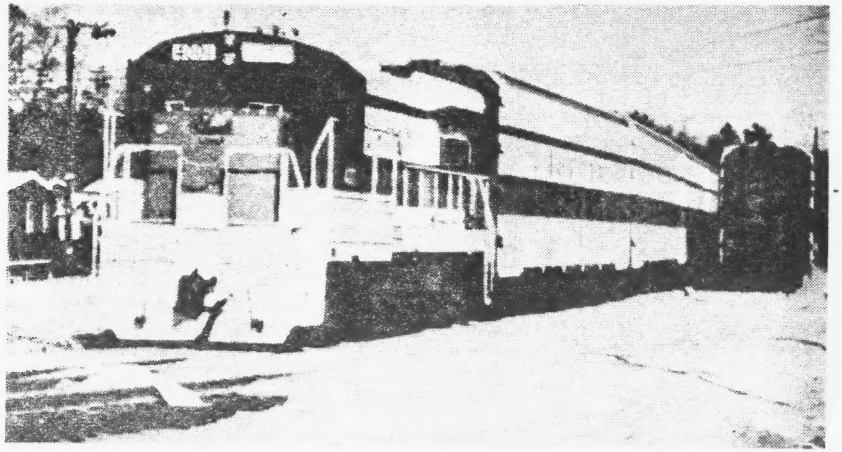

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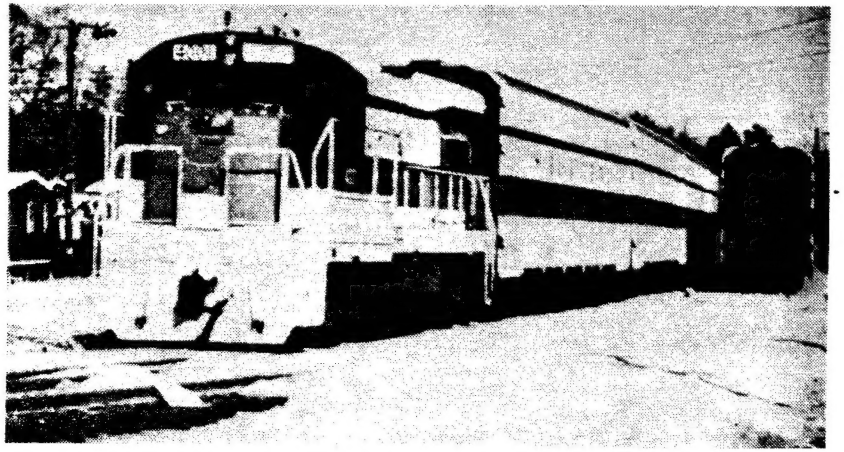

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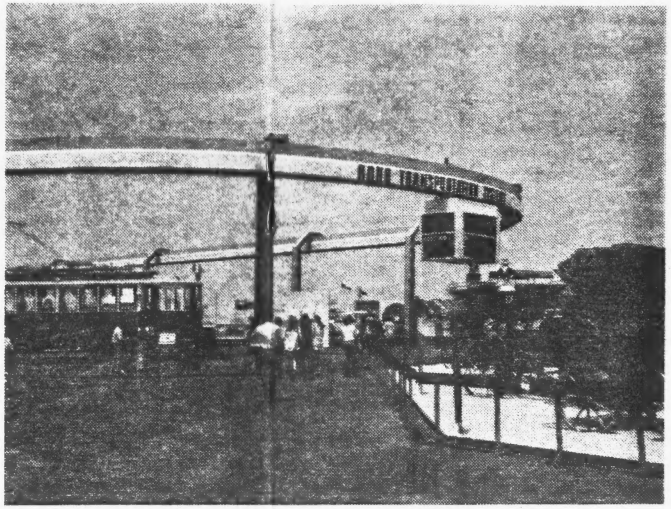
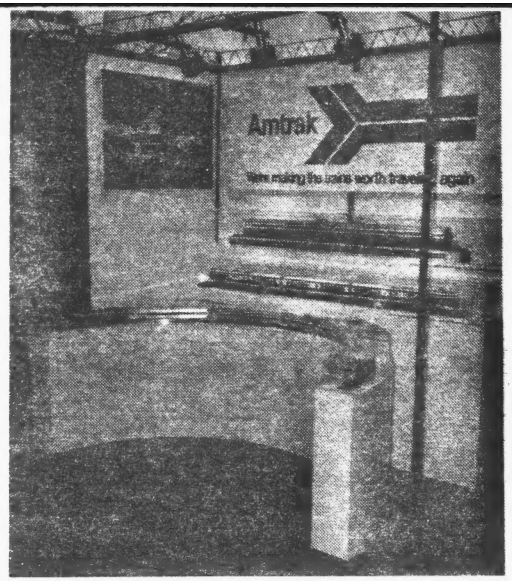
Report on the Transportation Exhibition

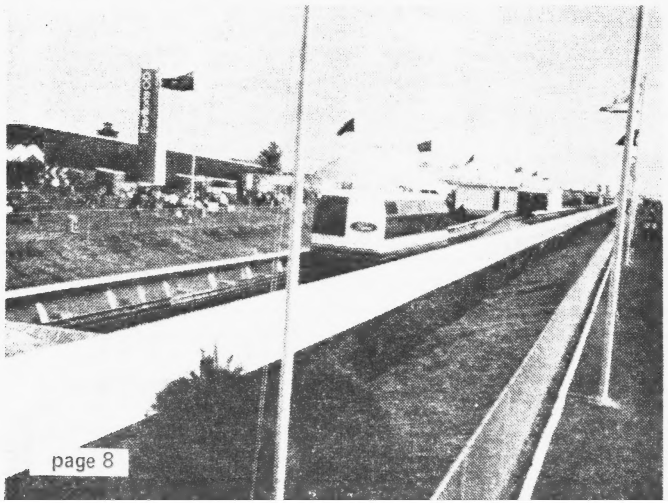




The future of transportation was explored on both the theoretical and practical levels in Washington D.C. May 27-June 4 as two major events took place. At Dulles Airport, 300 acres of displays, exhibits, mockups, and product demonstrations were the focal point of TRANSPO 72. Concurrently, in that city, the "1972 Congress of Transportation Conferences" brought together planners and engineers from all over the world in a (hopefully) fruitful interchange of ideas, plans and theories.

TRANSPO 72 had posted an attendance mark of over 800,000, with the last two days expected to send it up to 1,200,000. Most attendees were citizens of eastern metropolitan areas who suffered thru the traffic and the long drive (ironically, the only way to reach TRANSPO) to reach the exposition where they would see glimpses of systems that might someday alleviate the crushing traffic jams so prevalent today.

The proceedings had a carnival-like atmosphere. Long lines of people waited for periods of up to 2 hours to crowd into Rohr Corporation's "Monocab" (middle photo above) for its circular, 1½-minute ride-to-nowhere. (Note old trolley and carriages below the Rohr vehicle.)



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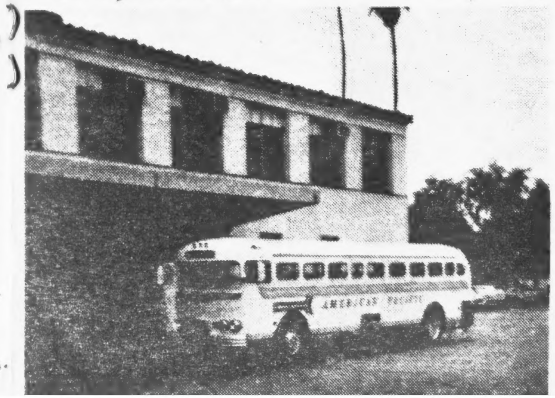
We hope the conference opened a few U.S. eyes.



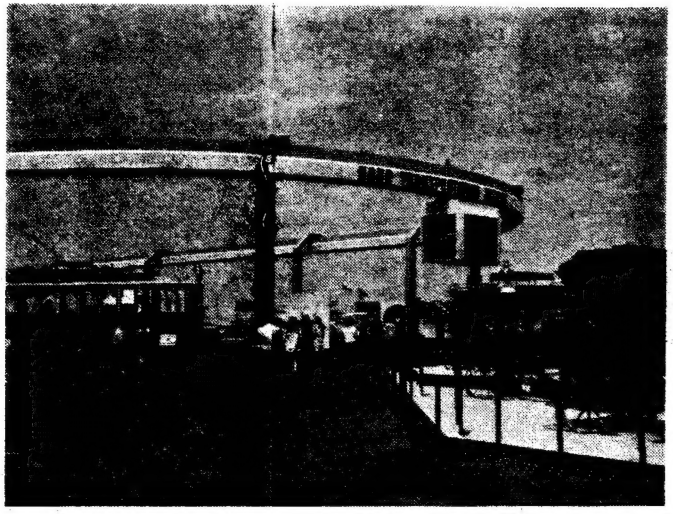
WHAT? AN AMTRAK BUS?

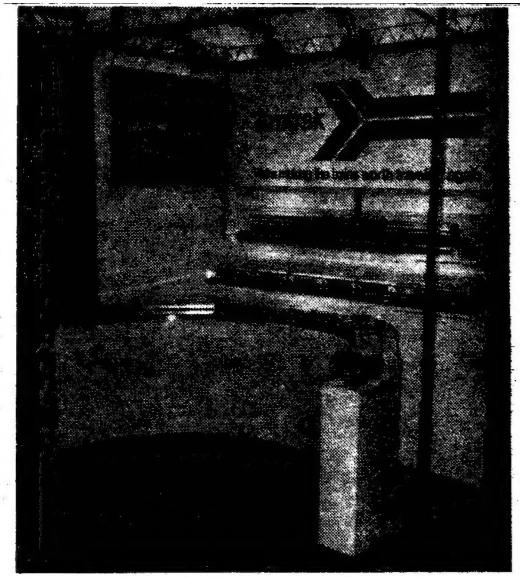
Sure enough, there it is. Complete with Amtrak logo above the front wheels. Paul Rayton photographed it next to the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal just recently. Its function is to take passengers from the westbound SUPER CHIEF on to Long Beach, if that is their destination. At the present there appears to be no such bus connection Long Beach-L.A.

transpo 72

by Paul Rayton

Report on the Transportation Exhibition





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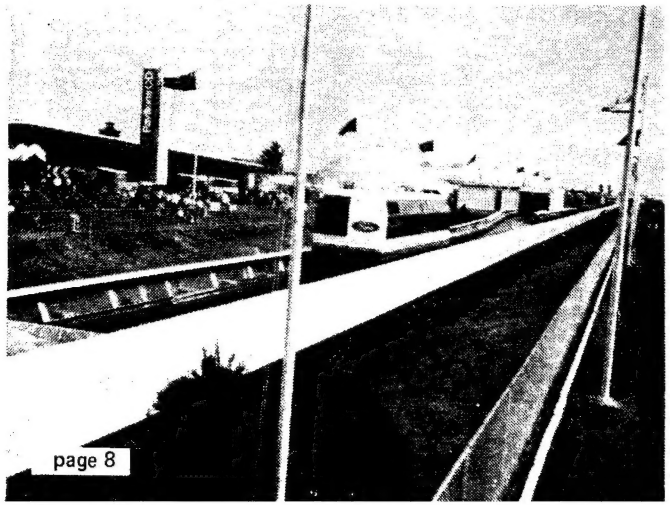

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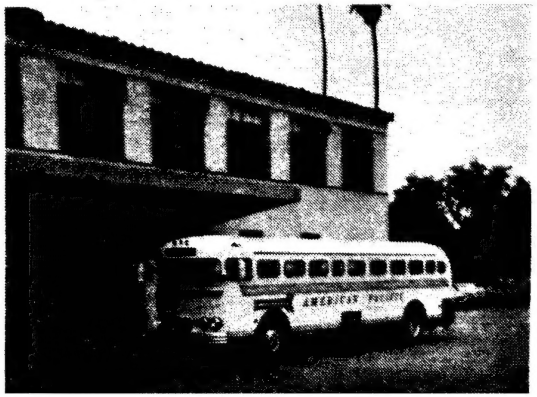

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THE PROBLEM OF BUYING TICKETS
GO TAKE A BUS! SHOUTS AMTRAK TICKET MAN

On May 17, Joseph Vranich, Executive Director of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, was waiting in line in New York's Penn Station to buy a METROLINER ticket to Washington. The time was 6:20pm, and 27 people had gathered in lines before 3 open windows. The lines moved slowly. The busiest window was the "Next METROLINER" window. Mr. Vranich described the ensuing events, in a letter to Amtrak President Roger Lewis, and released to the press, as follows:

"The agents appeared to be moving at a snail's pace, causing passengers waiting for the next METROLINER to become particularly edgy. Noting that his train was due to depart in 10 minutes, one passenger asked if any more windows were going to be opened and someone behind the counter said 'No.' That passenger and several others began to grumble. Another literally yelled 'Open up more windows!' The retort from one of the Amtrak agents was also a yell: 'Go take a bus!' At this point I was sufficiently angered to approach the windows to demand 'Who said "take a bus!"' One agent glared at me and said 'I did.'"

Mr. Vranich obtained the man's name and sent it on to Mr. Lewis. The next day Vranich observed an almost similar incident at 3:30pm at the same location, but being in a hurry to board the 3:30 METROLINER, he could not stop to investigate further.

Following these events, NARP made a survey of airline ticket offices on New York's busy 5th Avenue and found a much more favorable ratio of ticket agents to passengers than the two occasions observed in Penn Station.

Vranich concluded: "...Amtrak ticket agents in Penn Station may be overworked. Perhaps Amtrak's advertising has created a demand which has outstripped the capabilities of the reservations personnel.

"Nevertheless, no Amtrak agent--under any circumstances--should yell 'take a bus' to anybody. Some form of disciplinary action is in order. Furthermore, I believe the supervisor is just as responsible for overburdening the agents as the agents are responsible for their own actions. Apparently, the supervisor has fostered an unhealthy working atmosphere there.

"The worst place in New York City to purchase a ticket is at an Amtrak window. This is Amtrak's 'showcase' METROLINER service?"

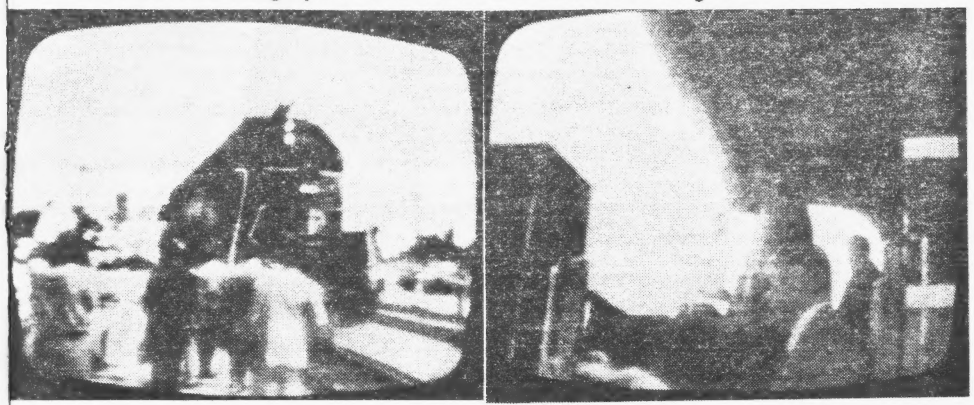
NARP UNCOVERS CONFLICT OF INTEREST ON AMTRAK BOARD

The National Association of Railroad Passengers is revealing in its May newsletter that Mr. John J. Gilhooley, an Amtrak board member, who is also president of Transport of New Jersey, the nation's third largest bus company, has authorized that his bus company make contributions to NAMBO (National Association of Motor Bus Owners).

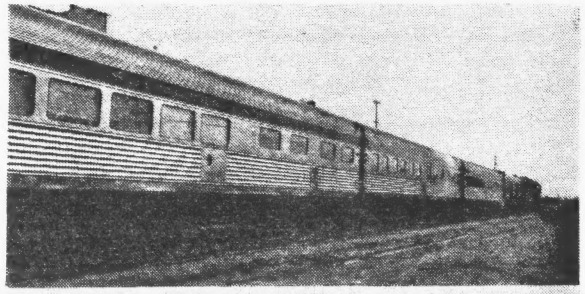
NAMBO's president, Charles A. Webb, in a recent speech strongly attacked Amtrak as a continuing "multi-billion-dollar boondoggle." Said he, "In my opinion there is a striking difference between subsidizing the operation of Amtrak fun trains from Los Angeles to Las Vegas and from San Francisco to Reno and subsidizing housing for the poor in inner cities. I confess to being prudish when the fun of a swinging trip is made possible by the tax dollars of the less affluent."

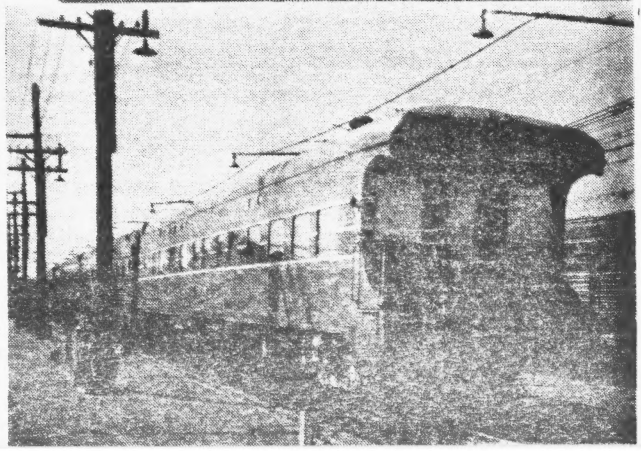
NARP, in a letter to Gilhooley's bus company, pointed out that the fun trains in question are running a profit. NARP also asked when Mr. Gilhooley would resign from the Amtrak board of directors, alluding to the conflict of interest. NARP said it has had no reply to its letter.

McGOVERN CAMPAIGN TRAIN CARS WRECKED
Most-Photographed Observation Just Misses Freight



ON THE TV: Photos above show Senator George McGovern's Amtrak campaign train from Sacramento to Bakersfield, thru California's San Joaquin Valley, June 3. At right, McGovern (standing) speaks from platform of Autoliner 100, the car owned by Kratville of Omaha, which ran on the first refurbished BROADWAY LTD May 2. The tan car with Amtrak striping, but with Amtrak logo of the BROADWAY run removed, is privately owned and on short-term lease to Amtrak for special occasions such as this. It was rebuilt from a 10/6 sleeper. McGovern also used it on a campaign train in Nebraska May 6. The California run, prefacing a successful primary election, may have given the trains as much publicity as it gave the candidate. "I've always loved trains," said McGovern. Consist of the all-SP (except for AUT-100) train: coaches 2392, 2395, 2384; lounges 2982, 2985; diner 10209. The train was apparently the first passenger train thru the Valley since the last San Joaquin Daylight of Apr. 30, 1971 (photo at right, #52). At Bakersfield McGovern and party left the train to fly to L.A. The train was turned to return to Oakland. During a stop in Fresno the train, parked close to the mainline, was sideswiped by a freight and the diner (used as a press car) and a coach were hit. The diner suffered damages such that SP said it would not be rebuilt. Safely back in Oakland, car 100 was put on the rear of the CITY OF SF consist for return to Omaha (bottom photo by Geo. Drury). As of this writing it is still in Oakland. McGovern's grandson was born election day, Jun. 6. In an apparent allusion to SP's wiggly valley ride, McGovern remarked at his midnight victory party "That whistle-stop tour may have had something to do with it."





Notes on a NORTH COAST HIAWATHA Trip - by Wes Roberts

Looking forward to relaxing two nights on train, as well as opportunity to see new country by daylight (never on the Northern Pacific east of Spokane before).

Check with the information desk at BN station confirmed that dinner would be served out of Minneapolis. This concern resolved, proceeded to observe station activity. Many people in waiting room, some obviously there to board train, but a great many there to meet others coming in from Chicago on No. 9. Children particularly bubbling with excitement, and everytime a switcher or freight drag passed beneath the station with bell ringing, there was a scurry to the windows that provide a view downward to the station tracks.

Curious: Signs advising that visitors are not permitted down to the tracks. Perhaps a reasonable rule in the days of vast throngs and multiple sections of trains, but the arrival and departure of trains is one of the activities people like to watch. Hope that Amtrak can incoporate train watching and taking friends and relatives "to the vestibule" to wave goodby thru the windows.in as many stations as possible.

More curious: The sign at the head of the escalator advising that patrons not accustomed to moving stairways should use the regular stairs. In this day and age, who isn't accustomed to escalators?

Station was clean, obviously well kept up by GN and successor BN, altho reductions in trains have led to removal of some of the tracks below. Convenient to downtown Minneapolis but rumored it will be replaced by a new Amtrak station perhaps near the Como Shops - a location about equal between Minn and St. Paul business districts.

No. 9 arrived OT, led by two Milwaukee E-9's which were traded for BN power while train was serviced. Consist of baggage, five coaches showing GN, NP, and UP heritage, plus a GN dome coach. Following was an NP diner-lounge, Burlington sleeper Silver Ridge, and one of GN's famous high window observation lounges, Cathedral Mountain, originally built for the 1951 versions of the Empire Builder. Cathedral Mt., and the first 3 coaches were removed here, and the GN sleeper Bois de Sioux River was attached. Disappointed that we would not have a California Zephyr tail car, but was advised it was off for servicing. Loss will be someone's gain later this year.

Diner lounge staffed by a Milwaukee crew this trip. Service, particularly the lounge service, left much to be desired by Paul Rayton standards but the meals were tasty, crew genial if on the slow side, and the scenery outside the window was new and ever-changing. Table service consisted of the variety for which Amtrak diners are becoming famous, and which intrigues railfans no end. The combinations of pottery and silverware items represented no less than 5 railroads - the GN, NP, Burlington, SP&S, and Milwaukee.

After a largely sleepless night (Silver Ridge needs immediate shopping to correct a violent side-sway problem) I was up early, eager to see part of that vast American prarie that must have seemed endless to the pioneer settlers. Mile after mile slid by, dotted by easily forgotten communities and innumerable lonesome looking ranch (farm?) houses. Scenery watchers should take this trip westbound. Interest and wall as geographic variety builds westward, and the eye is continually scanning the horizon for any sign of the mountains to come. The climb along the broad valley of the Yellowstone River towards the Continental Divide is imperceptible, and not until after leaving Billings do the great snowcovered peaks come into view.

Of course, the day was punctuated by the usual treks to the dining table. Aside from good food served on clean Milwaukee yellow linnens, we'll leave the gastronimical descriptions to Paul Rayton. He'll appreciate the finger bowls brought at the conclusion of each meal.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE COVER illustrations of this issue, front and rear, are from Amtrak's new booklet, "Traveling by train." This is the best publicity folder Amtrak has done yet. It's 24 heavy color pages explaining to the novice—and there are millions of them these days—how one goes about riding on a train. It's a badly-needed information booklet. It describes each type of car available on various trains, with floor diagrams. It tells how to order in the diner and gives information about buying alcoholic drinks on trains. It's all in mod drawings except for the cover photo of golden tracks stretching into the sunset. Makes anyone want to go rail traveling. Now if only all the trains looked as great as the drawings..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, you probably will have learned by the time this issue reaches you, is the new name of the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO/DENVER ZEPHYR during its daily summer operation. A very nice name, we think. Incidentally, one set of equipment of the train will be without a dome lounge west of Denver until at least the middle of June, since Autoliner shop in Omaha will not be finished with renovation of the cars it's working on before that time..... "THE DEVIL made me buy this car." Bumper strip seen last month in California..... PERSONNEL SHAKEUPS at Amtrak continue. On May 26 Jim McClellan terminated work there. He was well-liked by railfans..... WHO SAYS people won't pay for long-distance train travel? The May NARP Newsletter (in a special double-edition) will summarize a Senate committee report that shows that in July and August 1971 the SUPER CHIEF actually made a profit of 3%. And the Chicago-Seattle route had a deficit of only 5%. (To get the monthly newsletter and other benefits, join NARP for $10, $25 or more: 417 New Jersey Ave. S.E., Washington, DC 20003)..... WINE WORLD Magazine, April-May issue, has one of the best articles yet on riding and dining on the SUPER CHIEF. Main point of article is how many things you can do on a train, contrasted to the "No-No Syndrome" of jet travel. Mag costs $1 per issue, $4.75/year: 7555 Woodley Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91406..... WE SHOW copies of new Amtrak menus from COAST STARLIGHT (which went into use late in May) to many non-railfan friends and find them one of the best selling points for train travel. These menus are an enormous improvement, in both prices and selection. The child's menu is attractive and actually has the sort of food kids want (example: $1 gets you an omelet with jelly, french fries, chocolate sundae and milk). Amtrak has also printed the breakfast and dinner menus in miniature on one small sheet for ticket people to include in your ticket envelope..... OUR RUMOR reported last issue proved correct: the round-end observations will go off the tri-weekly COAST STARLIGHT and onto the 4-times-weekly COAST DAYLIGHT.....

* * *

APRIL SAW the heaviest loadings ever for METROLINERS NY-DC: 47,000 souls..... LATE NEWS just before we go to press (we generally write this column last): the Senate passed by voice vote the compromise Amtrak funding bill mentioned elsewhere in this issue and sent it on to the House June 8. It provides for international service to Montreal, Vancouver, and Neuvo Laredo..... PUGET SOUND and MT. RAINIER, trains Amtrak tried unsuccesfully to discontinue, are due for two-car consists this summer: dome coach and snack coach..... SUNSET LIMITED is to get a sleeper with compartments and drawing rooms for the summer. It will carry two diners plus a lounge..... MORE CONSIST changes for the summer: PANAMA LTD will have a dome coach and dome sleeper; the CHIEF is planned to carry only hi-level coaches, except for the thru NY-LA coach, and no other trains will use hi-level coaches; CAROLINA COAST will carry baggage, lounge, grill car, sleeper, and 4 or more coaches depending on day of week..... SAW OUR first Amtrak-painted coaches on CITY OF SF heading east June 8..... NATIONAL LTD will probably get a mail car shortly..... NY-BOSTON train travel was highest this April since Feb. 1969 when severe weather drove people to trains..... SUNSET LTD was delayed by massive freight derailment May 30 between Sanderson and Del Rio, Tex. Two engines and 38 cars left the tracks with well over $1 million damage. Passengers were bused between the east- and westbound trains. Reached L.A. 4-5 hrs late, missing connection with DAYLIGHT.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Taking a long trip? Then take the train for a new kind of relaxation. Stretch out in a reserved leg-rest coach seat where you can watch America roll by in the daytime and sleep comfortably at night. You'll find up-to-date dining and lounge accommodations or, if you prefer, you may enjoy the special luxury of a private sleeping room."

"As for that shorter trip--traveling by train means pure convenience. Traffic-clogged highways won't slow you down. Neither will the whims of weather. Just step aboard for a smooth, swift ride from city center to your destination."

--From Amtrak's booklet, "Traveling by Train."

"Amtrak is the City of San Francisco, the Broadway Limited, the Florida Special, the Super Chief, the TurboTrain, the Metroliner. Amtrak is 1,277 hospitable passenger cars gliding securely over 27,000 miles of track--bands of gleaming steel that link the cities of America. Amtrak is efficient, low-cost modern transportation."

--From Amtrak's booklet, "What is Amtrak?"

(Continued from page 2)

full meals against the desires of those who wanted just snacks. This dining car had most of the trappings of its big brother on the **CITY OF L.A.**; it was just smaller in size. Why, this diner even carried the UP private label wines.

My wife selected a simple Spanish Omelet while I decided to try the Mountain Trout. I'm not a trout fanatic, but I reasoned that if I was to have trout, I should at least eat it in a place that was sure to prepare it correctly. My confidence was to be rewarded.

The trout was sauteed as a whole fish and presented steaming hot. After the table had been completely set for the two of us, the waiter stepped up and deftly filleted the fish right there in front of me, a feat that even veteran waiters can muff. It was an exquisite touch of civility and certainly something I'd never expected to find here in the wilds of northern Colorado.

The crew of the dining car included a Steward, two waiters for the tables (one of whom also handled the counter), plus the kitchen crew. Tonight almost everybody wanted full dinners, so the limited table space was gratifyingly well-occupied, and the crew did a competent job of tending the diverse requests.

It was a memorable, excellent dinner. We had barely finished off dessert and coffee, it seemed, when we began approaching the outer environs of Denver.

Arrival in Denver was on time, as was departure. With the engines once again on the forward end, we pulled out of the city and headed eastwards once more, toward the plains of Kansas and our destination.

We went back into the lounge car, but it was deader than the subway in Boston after 2:00 am. There was probably more action in the baggage car--at least there some suitcases might be bumping around. The harsh fluorescent illumination of the car glared down onto the furnishings, creating the impression of a posh place with the work lights on. You half expected the janitors to walk in momentarily, brooms in hand.

We sat and idly paged thru the day's newspapers. Shortly the stale, soporific air got to us and we returned to our bedroom and prepared for the night.

The Great Plains start immediately east of Denver. Out our bedroom window we could now see miles and miles of moonlit flat land, punctuated by occasional lighted farmhouses. The vastness of it all soon lulled us to sleep.

The roadbed and train handling throughout the night--indeed for the whole trip from Los Angeles--had been uniformly superior. As evidence, consider this: I never heard or felt an untoward movement of the train until our Porter rang our room's buzzer at our stated wakeup hour.

We would have just enough time to dress and eat breakfast before arrival in Kansas City. It was still dark outside, enough light only to see dim outlines of trees and farms and infrequent patches of snow. We dressed (my shoes were shined *again,* I noticed) and went to breakfast. Again the crew were ebullient. The breakfast menu was a carbon copy of that on the **CITY OF LOS ANGELES**--except this one said, **"CITY OF KANSAS CITY; Good Morning."**

Checking my timetable against my watch, I found us right on time. In the vicinity of Kansas City, Kansas, we encountered an unexplained delay, so when we pulled into Kansas City's magnificent station we were about 10 minutes late. On time all the way, only to blow it right here at the end!

I was sorry to leave the train. Everything had been so fine, so pleasant. In spite of my negative preconceptions, I had had a very good ride. My whole outlook on Union Pacific passenger service and been revamped. We said farewell to our Porter and to the dining car crew, packed up and moved out of our "Pacific Home," which had brought us lo, these 2050 miles away from our Pacific home.

As I said, I now had a whole new outlook on UP passenger service. If I may, a few observations:

It's too bad the company was so efficiency-happy, for so it can only be called--all that enroute switching around. I could sympathize with the need for economy measures, but this was a little *too* much. The main objection is that if one connecting train was late, everything else was forced to be late, too. And that responsibility was too great an imposition on the sometimes wayward timekeeping of trains. In spite of a scheduling so slack you'd think it would be impossible to be late, frequently such was the case.

I often got the feeling that the trains were operated, not for passengers' service per se, but to please some nebulous regulatory body, state or federal. The onboard service was good, yes, but no longer was it advertised. The fares were relatively high. My wife and I *could* have traveled from Los Angeles to Kansas City via the Santa Fe for $36.70 less railfare! That amount ain't hay!

Then, there was the impression of a "phasing out" of many aspects of their famous service. Things gave the look of being used until they wore out, broke, or the supply was exhausted, at which time they would be simply "gone." To wit: train stationery, route maps, even napkins. Many of the latter had been clumsily sewn back together after being torn. Similarly the tablecloths.

The care afforded the dining car service was definitely far above the average. Yet still the feeling lingers that the UP no longer *really* cared about the reputation of its train. So the trips arrive late many times. Who cares? If the UP did, they didn't show it. They were more concerned with running their freights. Why weren't the windows washed en route? In fact, many times their windows were none too clean leaving the point of *origin.*

But to cap everything off, the last straw: in the waning months of 1970, the UP had sought permission from those "nebulous regulatory bodies" to terminate the run of this train **(CITY OF KANSAS CITY)** in Kansas City, *Kansas,* not Missouri. Ostensibly this would free them of the K.C. Union terminal expenses. But the result would have been more likely a precipitous drop in patronage. I very much doubt that we would have made the trip if we would have been required to take an extra hour and a $5.00 taxi ride to get across the river into Missouri. We rode because the connections were fairly easy. The whole reason for connections is convenience. (A few years back the CB&Q had wangled permission to move out of the same Union Station, and move the terminus of its Chicago and Omaha trains out to *North* Kansas City--so, effectively, nobody could ride them, or connect with them.) No doubt Missouri Pacific was hoping the cutback would occur, to help them rationalize their continuing train-off efforts.

Fate smiled on us, though, for the regulatory authorities--and the signing of the bill which ultimately was to establish Amtrak--required the train to continue running into Kansas City Union Terminal. Fortunately, old traditions die hard. All the crews of our trip had been courteous and likeable. Our Porter had been outstanding. We had been on time for virtually the entire trip. Our mini-sidetrips in Las Vegas, Green River, and Cheyenne had been an exciting sidelight, and something you could certainly never do from a plane.

We'd had a superior journey, from A to Z. The best way to recall the latter day Union Pacific--happy memories.

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